



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE BIBLICAL TEACHING CONCERNING THE HIRELING AND THE PAUPER

REV. ORLO J. PRICE, PH.D.  
Freeport, Ill.

The discussion of the hireling is closely connected with the treatment of the allied subjects. Slavery, which in its various forms lay at the basis of early civilization,<sup>1</sup> was highly developed before hired free labor became a factor in human society. Concubinage, a modified form of slavery, existed from the beginning, and supplied in no small way the industrial demands in the primitive state of society. The foreign resident, *ger*, the stranger dwelling under the protection of the family or tribe to which he did not belong, though not a slave, was bound to render service as a recompense for the protection he received.<sup>2</sup> The *corvée*, or forced labor, demanded by a ruler of the subject, which was sometimes paid for in wages to the workers, oftener not, while perhaps not affecting ordinary wage labor, is yet to be mentioned in this connection.

### A. THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the earliest codes (J and E, the Ten Commandments, the Book of the Covenant, etc.) the hired servant is not referred to. This fact would indicate at least that work for wages was not so common as to have become a subject for legislation. Careful regulations for the slave are made, however, in both the pre-exilian and post-exilian laws. The principal passages bearing upon the status of the slave

<sup>1</sup> It is not likely that the institution of slavery ever attained the importance in Israel that it did in other nations. For example, Whitehouse, article "Slavery," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, compares the number of slaves in Athens in 309 B. C. which was 300,000 as against 45,000 citizens, with the number of slaves at the return of Israel from captivity, which was 7,337 as against 42,360. The comparison is not conclusive, of course, owing to the different conditions of the two nations.

<sup>2</sup> He was to be dealt with in kindness (Deut. 10:19; 26:12); to enjoy sabbath rest (Ex. 20:10; 23:12; Deut. 5:14); to participate in the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:10 f.); of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:13 f.); offering of first fruits (Deut. 26:11); share the tithes (Deut. 14:28); gleanings of the field (Deut. 24:19); and have justice (Deut. 24:14).

are: Ex. 21:1-11; Deut. 15:12-18; Lev. 25:39-55. All these, with the exception of Lev. 25:44-46, deal with the Hebrew bondman. The rules that apply to bondmen "of the nations"—i.e., foreign slaves—are radically different from those applying to slaves of their own countrymen.

1. *The period of service of a slave.*—The period of service of the Hebrew slaves was six years<sup>3</sup> (Ex. 21:2); after that liberty.<sup>4</sup> If the slave does not choose freedom, the master shall accept him as a bondman forever (Ex. 21:5, 6). If he were married when he entered into bondage, wife and children may go out with him (Ex. 21:3). If the wife was given him by his master, then wife and children shall remain in bondage.

In the next, the deuteronomic code, the master is required when the time of bondage is over, to provide liberally for the departing slave, in recognition of his great service to his master, from his flocks, his corn and wine, for now he is regarded as his brother. Nothing is said about his family, but wife and children probably accompanied him (Deut. 15:13, 14). In the Levitical law, the post-exilian, the fundamental principle seems to be recognized that the Hebrew slave was not to be regarded any longer as a slave, but as a hired workman, who was to go free at the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:39, 40) with wife and children unto the possessions of his fathers. While in bondage he is to be treated kindly, as a "brother" or "sojourner," and not to be ruled over with rigor. The Law of Holiness (Lev., chaps. 17-26) seems to aim at the practical abolishment of Hebrew slavery, leaving it to be little else than compulsory service for debt.<sup>5</sup>

With the foreign slave, purchased or captive in war, the law did not deal so mercifully. He was a bondman forever (Lev. 25:46). Yet in case of a foreign captive woman who had been made a concubine there were certain restrictions (Deut. 21:10 ff). She could

<sup>3</sup> This seventh year in which the slave is to go free is not to be confused with the sabbatical year (of which Cheyne says that we have no evidence of its existence in pre-exilian times). It has only a remote analogy to the sabbatical year.

<sup>4</sup> This law of release does not seem to have been observed (Jer. 34:14).

<sup>5</sup> The case of a Hebrew in bondage to a foreigner is interesting (Lev. 25:47-55). So near does the condition approach that of free paid labor that it is said (vs. 53): "As a servant hired year by year shall he be with him: he shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight."

not be sold into bondage, but was to be set free in case her owner was not pleased with her.

2. *The rights of the slave.*—The bondman was protected in his person from cruelty on the part of the master (Ex. 21:20, 21, 26, 27); if a fugitive from his master, he could be returned only with his own consent (Deut. 23:15).<sup>6</sup> He was entitled to circumcision, and thus to membership in the religious community, which carried with it the right of participation in the feasts<sup>7</sup> and the guarantee of the sabbath rest.<sup>8</sup>

There was little that was harsh in the treatment of the slave in the earliest times. In the tribal form of society the slave was part of the family, and subject to the will of the head of the family in much the same way that children were. A slave was sometimes the trusted counselor of his master.<sup>9</sup> He was sent on important embassies.<sup>10</sup> He might even become a master's heir.<sup>11</sup> And sometimes he married his master's daughter.<sup>12</sup> In a time when personal liberty was a thing ill defined, it can readily be seen that in many cases the condition of servitude might be preferable to freedom. Attachment to a clan or tribe being essential to safety and life, it would matter little about the form of that attachment, whether as an offspring, as a sojourner, as a slave, or as a hired servant; though the last might well be the least desirable of them all.

3. *The hired servant.*—Though not mentioned in the earliest code, the hireling is the subject of legislation in the later ones. References to hired labor are, however, so infrequent that it is difficult to determine the place which the hired workman filled in the life of Israel.

In the deuteronomic law it is stipulated that the hired servant is to be paid every evening before sunset<sup>13</sup> (Deut. 24:15). In the Levitical law this rule is continued in full force (Lev. 19:13). And the rule applies whether the laborer is foreign or Hebrew. He was to have a share with the stranger, slaves, and master, in the sabbath

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also I Kings 2:39.

<sup>8</sup> Ex. 20:10.

<sup>7</sup> Deut. 12:12, 18; 16:11, 14.

<sup>9</sup> I Sam. 9:5-10.

<sup>10</sup> See Gen., chap. 24, where Abraham sends Eliezer for a wife for Isaac.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 12:2, 3; Prov. 22:21.

<sup>12</sup> I Chron. 2:34, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Judg. 17:10-12. This case is apparently an exception to the rule, the service being in its nature religious, and also that of voluntary vassalage.

produce of the land. He was to have the sabbath rest (Lev. 25:6). No law exists which prescribes the amount of the wage in any given industry.<sup>14</sup> But it is evident from examples given, from the nature of the case where free labor must compete with slave labor, and from the relatively unimportant place which paid labor occupied, that wages did not rise much above the point of barest subsistence for the worker. The fact that wages were required to be paid every day would point to the same conclusion.<sup>15</sup> As an illustration of the unregulated system of wages, note Laban's dealings with Jacob, where Jacob's wages were changed ten times in the twenty years (Gen. 31:41).

That oppression of the hired workers was common is evident from many passages in the Psalms and the prophets.<sup>16</sup> The sojourner, the poor, the hired servants find their advocates in the prophets of Israel. It seems evident, too, that the social and religious position of the free laborer was inferior to that of the servant.<sup>17</sup> In Deut. 15:18 we read: "To the double of the hire of an hireling hath he served thee." Deut. 24:14 speaks of the hireling as "poor and needy." Unlike the servant who is attached to the family, by ownership and by circumcision, the hireling may have no part in the family *sacra*; he may not eat of the passover (Ex. 12:45); nor may the hired servant of the priest eat of the holy food (Lev. 22:10).

From a study of the laws relating to hirelings, from the historical instances which picture conditions surrounding the wage-earner in Old Testament times, and from the expressions in Psalms and in the prophets (see also Job 12:1-12), we can but conclude that the lot of the free workman, from the point of view of the necessities of life, was far less desirable than that of the slave.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Laws of Hammurabi, in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. V, in which the wages of day's labor in various occupations are stipulated.

<sup>15</sup> There are isolated instances where an annual salary seems to have been paid. See 7 below (Deut. 24:15; Lev. 19:13; Job 7:2). There are also references to craftsmen, who probably worked by the job or piece, but no hint is given as to how they were paid (II Chron. 24:12; 25:6; Ex. 2:9).

<sup>16</sup> Mal. 3:5; Jer. 22:13; Isa. 10:2; Ez. 22:29.

<sup>17</sup> Bennett, article "Wages," Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, says: "In the earlier period of Israelite history, when almost every family had its own land, it would be the exceptionally poor, ne'er-do-well, who was on bad terms with his kin, or the foreigner, that hired himself into service."

4. *The poor in Hebrew life.*—Some of the passages are: Lev. 25:35-37; Ex. 22:25-27; Deut. 15:7, 8; 24:10-13. In the earliest legislation the poor are favored: "If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest. If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: for this is his only covering; it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? When he crieth unto me that will I hear; for I am gracious" (Ex. 22:25, 26). Interest shall not be charged them for loans,<sup>18</sup> and their pledge must be returned before nightfall. The prohibition is absolute in case of a widow's garment; it shall not be taken as a pledge. Neither shall a mill or an upper millstone be taken (Deut. 24:17). The same rule probably applied to all indispensable animals or utensils. In the deuteronomic laws one is not to refuse to lend to a poor brother, but is to do it willingly, and with the giving is the promise of blessing upon the giver (Deut. 15:7-11). Furthermore, the lender is forbidden to enter the poor man's house to fetch out the pledge, but is to stand outside until the pledge is brought to him (Deut. 24:10, 11). The poor man's possessions and personality are thus guarded against the possible insolence of wealth and power. The same instructions are repeated in the Levitical (post-exilian) law, with the further injunction that the poor brother is to be permitted to live with the wealthier as a sojourner and as a stranger (Lev. 25:35-37). He is to be accorded the benefit of the laws of oriental hospitality. He is neither slave, hired workman, nor debtor, but the guest of his more fortunate brother.

Deut. 24:19-21; Lev. 19:9, 10, give the poor the right to glean. A forgotten sheaf, the scattering olives, the gleanings of the grapes are to be left for the sojourner and for the fatherless and for the widow; and the corners of the harvest field, and fallen fruit of the vineyard, are to be left for the poor and for the sojourner (cf. the story of Ruth). More than this, the right of each person to take what was needed

<sup>18</sup> No interest was permitted on any loan by the Hebrew law. This was probably a protest against the exorbitant rates charged in surrounding countries, and was a wise provision owing to the fact that only the poor, who would not borrow to invest, were the borrowers. In later times interest seems to have been regularly charged (see Matt. 25:27).

for food at any time while passing the field or vineyard, was a law that benefited the poor.<sup>19</sup>

A share in the produce of the fallow land to be set apart for the poor in the sabbatical year was a measure to alleviate poverty<sup>20</sup> (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 25:6). "And six years shalt thou sow thy land, and shalt gather in the increase thereof: but the seventh thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard" (Ex. 23:10, 11). The same provision is repeated in the Levitical passage (Lev. 25:6).

A portion of the tithes every third year was to be enjoyed by the poor also. "At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase in the same year and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the sojourner and the fatherless and the widow, that are within thy gates shall come, and shall eat and shall be satisfied" (Deut. 14:28, 29). The same injunction is laid upon the Israelite in Deut. 26:12, 13.

The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles were both to be shared in by the "fatherless and the widows" along with the servants and the sojourners (Deut. 16:11, 14; see also Neh. 8:12).

Also, as noted above, the hireling, who perhaps might in almost every case be counted among the poor, is protected by the command that his employer shall every day pay his wages (Lev. 19:13).

While these many provisions are made against suffering from poverty, the administration of justice is, furthermore, not to be affected by consideration for the poor. The post-exilic law reads (Lev. 19:15b): "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."<sup>21</sup>

A study of the prophets<sup>22</sup> makes it no less than certain that one

<sup>19</sup> Deut. 23:24, 25.

<sup>20</sup> While this law does not appear in Deuteronomy, a fixed period of seven years is there appointed for poor debtors, forbidding any proceedings being taken against a debtor in that year (Deut. 15:1f.).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. also Ex. 23:3; Deut. 1:17; 16:19.

<sup>22</sup> Am. 8:4-6; Isa. 3:14, 15; 10:2; 32:7; Sodom's sin was her neglect of the poor Ezek. 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; cf. also Job 24:4; Prov. 30:14; Isa. 58:7; Prov. 22:22; 14:21; Am. 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; Jer. 2:34; Isa. 14:30; 25:4; 29:19.

of the great sins of the people against which they preached was the sin of oppressing the poor. May it not also be maintained that the very fact that such abundant and systematic provision was made for the poor, and some of it of such a nature that it might well be called "labor legislation," would seem to indicate that there was the demand for such provisions, created by the heartless disregard for the needy on the part of the well-to-do? The picture in Job (12:1-12), if it is at all accurate, portrays a state of things which demanded rigorous legislation as much as ever England needed the factory laws to meet the changed industrial conditions of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

In the Apocrypha and in the rabbinical literature such prominence is given to almsgiving as to make it evident that there was some cause for the pleading which prophets made for the poor. The very word<sup>24</sup> used to denote righteousness in general in the Old Testament comes in the Apocrypha and rabbinical literature to mean almsgiving in particular. As we come across it in the Sermon on the Mount, almsgiving has place alongside the other acknowledged duties of the religious life, viz., prayer and fasting. To quote from Eccclus. 29:12: "Shut up mercy (almsgiving) in thy treasures, it shall deliver thee from all affliction." Tobit 4:11: "Mercy (alms) deliver from death." Again from Rosh hashkanah 3: "Through alms a man partakes of eternal life." How far the statutes of the Old Testament found fulfilment in the Jewish life in the three or

<sup>23</sup> It has been noted by many, and should not be forgotten, that along with the poverty of the Israelite, and even more grievous, was the humiliation of social and religious wrongs. The three words most used to describe the condition of the poor are *ānī* ("afflicted," "bowed down," "poor"), *ebyon* ("needy"), *dal* ("reduced," "poor"). Driver calls attention to the fact that these terms came to denote the godly poor, the suffering righteous, the persons who were the godly servants of Jehovah. "It is evident that in ancient Israel, especially in later times, piety prevailed more among the humbler classes than among the wealthier and ruling classes; indeed, the latter are habitually taken to task for their cruel and unjust treatment of the former. So *ānī* acquired a religious coloring, especially in the Psalms, where the *aniyyim* are substantially identical with those who are elsewhere in the same psalm called the 'godly,' 'the righteous,' 'the faithful,' etc. Pss. 9:12; 10:2, 9, 12; 12:5; 18:27; 22:24; 25:16; 34:6; 35:10; 37:14; 74:19, 21; 109:16; 140:12; 40:17; 70:5." These passages, Driver says, are all post-exilic, except 18:27, and reflect the religious condition of the post-exilic community. It will be noted that the troubles of which the *ānī* complain are not chiefly poverty, but social or religious wrongs.

<sup>24</sup> δικαιοσύνη, ἡ δικαιοσύνη



four centuries after Malachi is difficult to know. We are quite certain, however, that much of the Old Testament ideal remained only an ideal when the personal sacrifice of the rich for the poor was involved. We also know that alms for the poor in Palestine were systematically collected in the synagogues of the dispersion for the poor of Palestine, as also for the poor of the synagogue itself.

5. *Summary of Old Testament teaching.*—These results show that—

a) The earliest form of industrial service was provided by the institution of slavery. This was practically the only form while Israel was still in the tribal or patriarchal stage of development. The condition of the slave under primitive conditions was not to be compared with that under civilized society. His place was not usually one of more than ordinary hardship, and he received that protection which in a tribal or feudal state the individual must ever seek from the overlord. In Israel the law sought to mitigate the evils of slavery, especially when the slave was a Hebrew, providing for his liberty when the seventh year came around; providing against cruelty, by forbidding return of fugitive slaves, and prescribing penalties for certain abuses; providing for the religious training and privileges of the slave; guaranteeing liberty in the year of jubilee. More than this, the later law sought practically the abolishment of domestic slavery, by appealing to slave-owners to treat slaves as hired servants, and by restricting the right of owners of slaves.

b) The class of the poor included the hired servant, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger, and regulations that looked to the welfare of the one class almost always included the other. This condition of the wage-earning class is easily accounted for by the fact that free labor competed with slave labor, and that socially and religiously the hired servant was, as a matter of fact, on a lower plane than the household slave.

c) The consideration for the poor was based on religious and filial motives. Ex. 23:15b, "Lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee." See also Deut. 15:9b; Ex. 22:23; Lev. 25:39-42; Job 31:13-15.

d) There were provisions in agricultural life for the poor: the sabbatical year in which the poor ate of the fruits of the fallow ground;

the third-year tithes, of which the poor partook along with the Levite and the stranger (Ex. 14:27, 29); the right to glean in field, orchard, and vineyard (Deut. 24:19-21); the right to eat of the standing grain and of the ripe fruits (Deut. 23:24, 25).

e) There were provisions made for the poor in the religious feasts (Deut. 16:11-14), but hired servants were not included in this provision.

f) Provisions in the nature of labor legislation, viz., that the workman should be paid his wages at the close of each day's work (Deut. 24:15). This, in a time when business honor was as yet undeveloped and credit in the modern sense was unheard of, would be a wage-earner's only security against hunger and want.

g) Provisions in the nature of economic legislation. No interest was to be charged. This, in an age when only poor were likely to be borrowers, was distinctly favorable to those belonging to this class. A pledge which the poor should give for payment was not to be retained over night, and certain kinds of pledges, such as those which were essential animals or utensils, were not in any case to be taken as pledges.

h) Provisions which guarded the personal liberty of the poor. The creditor was not permitted to enter the home of the poor to take a pledge, but was to stand without until the article is brought to him.

i) The benefits of the oriental laws of hospitality accrued to the poor (Lev. 25:35-37). According to these the stranger, even the enemy who found himself in the premises of a landlord, was entitled to the courtesy of the invited guest, and to food and shelter while he might choose to remain.

j) Provision for equal justice in the courts for both rich and poor (Lev. 19:15b; Deut. 24:17).

k) The poor always had one resource, that of selling himself or his own into slavery, and thus procuring sustenance at least.

l) There was direct command to give to the poor, especially in the later times, inasmuch as the poor would always be in the land (Deut. 15:11; Prov. 28:27; Dan. 4:27).<sup>25</sup>

So thorough and systematic was the provision made for the poor

<sup>25</sup> The Daniel passage seems to be the foreshadowing of the time when almsgiving should have redemptive or atoning power. See below.

in the Old Testament that there is scarcely a trace of beggary or mendicancy found anywhere.<sup>26</sup> In the legislation we find the first beginnings of exemption laws, labor laws, employers'-liability laws, and the pauper tax (in third-year tithes).

#### B. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. *The employed*.—There are few references to the employed class. Slavery probably occupied the same place in society as in Old Testament times.<sup>27</sup> We read in Mark 1:20 that Zebedee had a paid crew. In the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke, chap. 15) hired servants are spoken of. Also the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1, 2) would indicate that there was a distinct class of day laborers who were paid at the close of each day. Other references are in John 4:36, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, etc.;" and in Jas. 5:4, "Behold the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out." The office of hireling has, as in the Old Testament, something of the disparaging about it, as witness the words of Jesus (John 10:13): "The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." It has been mentioned also that the apostles always style themselves, not the "hired servants" of Christ, but the slaves, the *douloi*. This might be used, however, as an argument that the hired servant was either more or less highly esteemed than the slave. It would seem that the existence of the *corvée* was implied in Matt. 5:41: "And whoever shall impress thee to go one mile, go with him two." Soldiers were paid a wage, as seen from John Baptist's counsel to those soldiers who asked what they should do: "Be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14b).

As to the treatment of the hired, few data are afforded for any definite statements. If the parable of the Prodigal Son presents a

<sup>26</sup> Cf., however, I Sam. 2:36; Ps. 109:10.

<sup>27</sup> Jesus does not directly refer to the institution of slavery. He does, however, in teaching and parable, take for granted its existence. See Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:35-37; 17:7; 22:27; John 13:16. He commends faithfulness on the part of the servant. So also Paul seems to recognize it as the established order, and urges both servants and masters to conduct themselves as servants of Christ. See I Cor. 7:21-24; I Tim. 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9; Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9. See also I Pet. 2:18-20. Paul maintains that in Christ are no such distinctions as servant and master (Gal. 3:26, 28; Col. 3:10, 11).

true picture, then the condition of the paid worker was bearable ("How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare"), and yet allowance must be made in this for the view-point of the hungry prodigal. Jesus said in sending out his disciples (Luke 10:7): "The workman is worthy of his hire." Jesus makes no new law for wages, hours, conditions of labor or the laborer. Through the estimate of the value of the individual man which he inculcated by his teaching, he planted the seeds of a brotherhood which, we believe, will ripen into a system of perfect justice and equity for labor.

2. *Poverty*.—Poverty in the New Testament has assumed a very different aspect from that seen in the Old. Beggary is frequent. The parable of Lazarus was probably a picture of real life all too common (Luke 16:20, 21). The incident of blind Bartimaeus, and of the blind beggar who was sent to wash in the Pool of Siloam, and of the lame man who asked alms of Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, point to a condition in society which, coupled with the Old Testament laws and rabbinical teaching with regard to care of the poor, might easily account for the high esteem in which almsgiving was held by the Jewish people.

The epistles only confirm the impression one gets from reading the gospels as to the prevalence of opportunities for the exercise of charity. The "poor saints" at Jerusalem—whether made poor by the indifference of the early church to the value of material goods, which gave rise to a system that might be called a crude form of communism, or whether their poverty was due to other causes in no way connected with the practices of the new faith—were a care to the apostle Paul throughout his ministry. And from numerous other sources it may be determined that the "submerged tenth" was in evidence everywhere. Let it suffice to quote from Hatch:<sup>28</sup>

In the age which preceded final decay [of the Roman Empire], the pressure of poverty was severely felt. There was not that kind of distress which is caused by a great famine or a great pestilence; but there was that terrible tension of the fibers of the social organism which many of us can see in our own society.

The beginning of the Christian era was the

crisis of the economic history of the western world. There grew and multiplied a new class in Graeco-Roman society—the class of paupers. And out of the

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 34 f.

growth of a new class there developed a new virtue—the virtue of active philanthropy, the tendency to help the poor, . . . the instinct of benevolence was fairly roused.

3. *The teaching of Jesus and the apostles regarding care of the poor.*—Finding the care of the unfortunate and poor elevated into a leading virtue, Jesus did not discourage, but rather sought to purify, the practice of almsgiving, by requiring that it be done without ostentation and even in secret (Matt. 6:2). He did not directly attack the idea of merit which had come to be associated with almsgiving, but rather spoke of a divine recompense for such works when they are done without a view to display before men. The following passages will be found to present positive teaching on the subject: Matt. 5:42; 19:21; Luke 6:30, 38; 14:13; 16:9; also Matt. 25:34–40. The last is the most remarkable passage of all. Here the test of final acceptance with the Father seems to be service rendered to the hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, and imprisoned. In Matt. 5:42 the precept is to give to everyone that asketh, without specifying what is to be given, and, interpreted in the light of Jesus' own conduct, and as we have no record that he ever gave an alms of money to the poor, means just that ideal of giving which modern scientific charity is aiming at, viz., the gift of help toward self-help. The rich young man (Matt. 19:21) was bidden to give his all to the poor. The poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, rather than the social equals, are to be feasted by those able to make feasts, and the reward of heaven is again promised, in the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:12–14). Again, Jesus (in Luke 16:9) teaches that the right use of the mammon of unrighteousness is to make friends of the needy by succoring them in their need. For, as taught in Matt. 25:40, the poor are the representatives of Christ, and no better use of wealth can be made than to use it in winning them as friends. It will be remembered, too, that when Zaccheus had declared, "Behold the half of my goods I give to the poor," Jesus was ready with the statement: "Today is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:8, 9).

But there is plainly another side to Jesus' thought. It will be remembered that in his Nazareth declaration of his call he read from Isa. 61:1, where to preach good tidings to the poor stands out prominently, and along with binding up the broken-hearted, proclaiming

liberty to the captives, etc. Another time, as Jesus watched the rich cast their gifts into the treasury, his approbation was called forth as a widow made her offering: "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow cast in more than they all" (Luke 21:1-4). In the story of the anointing by Mary of Bethany his estimate of the low worth of almsgiving as compared with other manifestations of love is at least hinted at. The disciples saw greater possibilities in the ointment if given to the poor than if used as Mary had used it, and felt that Jesus should have corrected the owner and directed it to that more merit-bringing purpose. But his reply, "The poor ye have always with you and whensoever ye will ye may do them good," strongly implies that other forms of service may sometimes take precedence over almsgiving (Mark 14:3-9). His very warnings against the publicity and abuse of giving charity (Matt. 6:2, 3), and the story of the Good Samaritan, in which the giving of money is the smallest feature of the help rendered, teach unmistakably that the attitude of Jesus toward the prevalent almsgiving of his day was radically different from that of Jewish teachers. Add to this all we know of his daily work of healing and comforting the afflicted poor, with no record that money was ever given by him or his disciples to the needy,<sup>29</sup> and these conclusions can be made: (1) Jesus regarded the poor and unfortunate with tenderness and compassion, and a large part of his mission was to minister to them. (2) The giving of alms, when free from selfish motives, is good, is a duty, and is entitled to heavenly reward. (3) In fulfilling the ideal of service, the personal ministration is far more important than mere gifts, and, as expressed in the words of modern charity, means, "not alms, but a friend." (4) Stewardship, as taught by Jesus, or the holding of all possessions as a trust to be used for him, implies the constant and careful use of all powers, whether material or personal, for the benefit of the needy, inasmuch as he has identified himself with these classes (see Matt. 25:21; Luke 12:42).<sup>30</sup>

In the early church the same zeal which Jesus found among the

<sup>29</sup> However, see John 13:29, where "some thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus said unto him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast; or that he should give something to the poor." This last clause would hardly have been possible if giving money to the poor was entirely foreign to the habits of the disciples of Jesus.

<sup>30</sup> See also Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, pp. 243 ff.

people seemed to prevail. The first election of Christian officers was to secure the equitable distribution of alms.<sup>31</sup> The gentile church was bound to the mother-church at Jerusalem by the necessity of making offerings for the poor (see Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 16:3; II Cor., chap. 9; Acts 24:7). It is probable that each church had its list of poor (I Tim. 5:9). We know that the first Christian homily that has come down to us speaks thus of almsgiving: "Fasting is better than prayer, almsgiving is better than fasting; blessed is the man who is found perfect therein, for almsgiving lightens the weight of sin" (II Clem. Rom. 16). Hatch says,<sup>32</sup> referring to the early Christian church:

Other associations were charitable; but whereas in them charity was an accident, in the Christian associations it was of the essence. They gave to the religious revival that almost always accompanies a period of social strain, the special direction of philanthropy. They brought into the European world that regard for the poor which had been for several centuries the burden of Jewish hymns. They fused the Ebionitism of Palestine with the practical organization of Graeco-Roman civilization.

The apostles were not slack in urging liberal giving, as II Cor., chap. 9, shows. "God loveth a cheerful giver."<sup>33</sup> "It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>34</sup> James is almost vehement in his denunciation of the spirit of discrimination against the poor (Jas., chap. 2). In his effort to show that faith must be accompanied by works, he says (vss. 15, 16): "If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled, and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?" John in I John 3:17 is even more emphatic on the duty of relieving want: "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" Paul in writing to Timothy lays specific relief work upon the individual and upon the church: "If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve

<sup>31</sup> Acts 6:1-6.

<sup>32</sup> *The Early Christian Churches*, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> II Cor. 9:7.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 20:35: "I have showed you all things how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

them and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (I Tim. 5:16). Paul in telling the Galatians about the Jerusalem council specifies that the one request which the Jerusalem leaders made of him and Barnabas was that in their going to the gentiles they were to remember the poor, and he adds: "Which thing I also was zealous to do."<sup>35</sup> Without going further into details in the study of the work of the early church in caring for the poor, this much is clear, that in the extent of almsgiving the Christian church was in no whit behind the Jewish church, while both motive and method were in some degree changed. The early church through its organization made the caring for the poor a large part of its work. The writers of epistles lay emphasis on the necessity for liberal giving to the impoverished, and base their exhortations upon the highest motives. There is no suggestion in the New Testament writings of the early church of merit in connection with the act of giving alms. Only as it is the fruit of, and accompanied by, love does it profit (I Cor. 13:3). "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . but have not love, I am nothing."

<sup>35</sup> Gal. 2:10.